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## Time to consign this view of the past to the history books

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Version: Version of Record

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**WELSH COLUMN**

**Cyfle i gofio am anwyliaid ac nid am fy mod o blaid yr holl giamocs**



**Hafina Clwyd**

**B**u tipyn o ddadlau ar radio ac ar bapur yn ddiweddar ynglyn â'r priodoldeb o wisgo pabi ar yr adeg arbennig hon o'r flwyddyn.

Cyn mynd ati i geisio trafod y mater rhaid i mi ddweud un peth. Yr wyf yn casau'r arferiad cyfoes o wneud pethau ar yr adeg anghywir o'r flwyddyn.

Goleuadau Nadolig yn y siopau ddechrau

Tachwedd; byns y Pasg ar werth fis Chwefror; tân gwyllt yn ffrwydro ddiwedd Hydref ac yn y blaen. Arferiad arall yw hwnnw sydd wedi egino ymhlith ein darlledwyr sef gwisgo'r pabi coch o leiaf bythefnos cyn Dydd y Cadoediad.

Yr unig ddiwrnod i mi wisgo'r pabi oedd ddydd Sul pan ddaeth torf fawr at y gofologoln ryfel yma yn Rhuthun. Yno yr oedd seindorf Ysgol Brynhyfryd, côr yr eglwys, cadetiaid o bob lliw a llun, cynghorwyr, ein Haelod Seneddol, criw o hen filwyr llesg a nifer fawr o'r cyhoedd a phawb yn gwisgo'r pabi coch.

Y mae yna rai sydd yn gwrthod ei wisgo neu yn gwisgo pabi gwyn. Rhydd i bawb ei farn ac ni ddylid bwllo neb i wisgo neu beidio wisgo rhywbeth yn erbyn eu hewylllys.

Heddychwraig wyf i o ran natur. Credaf mai rhyfel yw'r peth mwyaf annynad ar wyneb daear. Mae'n taflu ei gysgod ymhell. Ond yr wyf yn barod i wisgo'r pabi coch. Y pabi a ddathlir yn symbol o'r gwaelod a gollwyd yn Fflandrys lle'r oedd y pabi yn tyfu'n wyllt ac arbennig o hardd.

Ac wrth sefyll mewn dau funud o ddistawrwydd fore Sul nid meddwl am y rhyfelwyr cigog yr oeddwn i eithr am fy hen ewythr a gafodd ei ladd o fewn wythnos i gyrraedd Ffrainc yn 1917. Llaned deallus a llangar na ddaeth yn ôl. Stori bron bob teulu yng Nghymru.

Yr oeddwn hefyd yn meddwl am fy niweddar w'r a'i frawd (a fu farw wythnos yn ôl yn 92 oed) – y ddau yn gorfoed mynd i'r rhyfel yn syth wedi gorffen eu cwrs hyfforddi athrawon yn y Coleg Normal yn 1942. Mynd heb erioed roi troed mewn ystafell ddosbarth a cholli talp o'u hieuenctid. Heb sôn am golli pedair blynedd o gyflog. Ac ar ddiwedd y rhyfel yn gorffod talu eu grant yn ôl!

A dyna pam yr wyf y gwisgo'r pabi coch a dyna pam yr wyf fel aelod o Gyngor y Dref yn barod i fod yn rhan o'r cofio wrth y gofeb bob blwyddyn. Nid am fy mod o blaid yr holl giamocs sydd ynglyn â'r fyddin ond am fy mod eisiau cofio am anwyliaid. A beth wyf yn ei olygu wrth ddweud giamocs, medde chi.

Yr un peth sydd yn atgas gen i yw gweld plant ifanc a chadetiadaid glasod yn martsio ac yn chwifio eu breichiau a stampio eu traed wrth fynd â'u torch at y gofeb. Mae'n edrych yn gwbl writhon. Bron na ddwyedwn ei fod yn afiach. Rhyw gêm gyffrous yw bod yn filwr i fechgyn bach... Ond medr y chwarae droi'n chwerw dros ben.

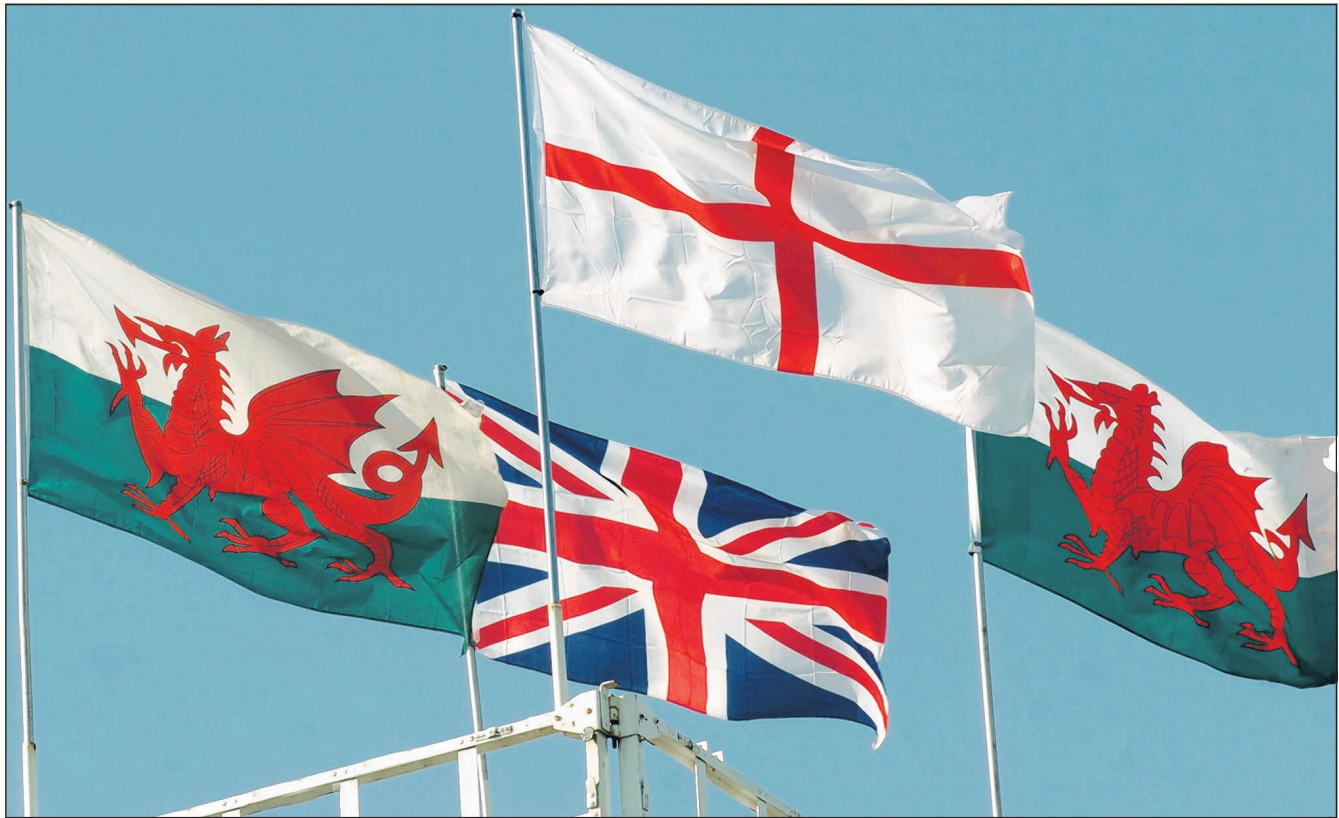
Wedi inni golli peth wmbredd o egin y wlad mewn dau ryfel mawr, gan lawm oethio na welem ryfel arall, beth gafwyd ond Korea. Fietnam, y Malinas, Irac ac yn awr Affganistan. A rhaid gofyn i ba beth y bu'r golled hon?

Ond y mae rhyfela bron mor hen â'r cread. Efallai mai'r caswir yw ei fod yn rhan annorfof o'r natur ddynol. Mai peth gwbl naturiol yw'r ysfa am ladd. Ac na fydd byth fyd o heddwch.

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■ An Anglo-centric view of British history has misrepresented Wales and the other Celtic nations for far too long

**Time to consign this view of the past to the history books**

**F**OR a long time, the Welsh past has been treated as little more than a sideshow in the history of Britain. Simon Schama's television series *The History of Britain* (2000) was actually a history of England. When it did touch on Wales, the focus was on how Welsh nationhood was forged through English rule.

David Starkey's *Monarchy* (2004-06), although broad-based across Britain, was equally Anglo-centric. The much-admired radio series *This Sceptred Isle* (1995-2006) also claimed to be a history of Britain but focused predominantly on England.

Indeed, its title derived from a line in Shakespeare's *Richard II* which refers specifically to England, rather than Britain. It seems that, even after devolution, the assumption that British history is really just English history lives on.

But where does this assumption come from? The answer, as you might expect, lies in the past. In part it derives from centuries of English domination since the Edwardian Conquest (1282), and from a sense of English superiority dating back even further. As the twelfth-century Bishop John of Salisbury put it, the Welsh were "rude and untamed; they live like beasts".

However, more recent factors have also contributed to the marginalisation of Welsh history and, by extension, Welsh life and culture.

A key development was the idea that societies advanced from barbarism to civilisation. Although this notion of

Wales has been written out of the story of Britain and English historians are still failing to appreciate the nation, writes **Richard Marsden** of Cardiff University and the Open University in Wales

historical progress had been around since ancient times, it became increasingly complex and influential in the 1700s.

The contemporary Scottish historian William Robertson, for instance, stated that "nations, as well as men, arrive at maturity by degrees, and the events which happened during their infancy or early youth cannot be recollected, and deserve not to be remembered".

Such views made it possible to class your own society as "mature" and civilised, whilst judging others as "infant" and barbarous. This was, of course, rather subjective.

By the 19th century nationalism was rearing its ugly head across Europe, and the idea of historical progress meant that nations could claim to be more advanced than their neighbours. English nationalism was no different, and was also fuelled by a nasty edge of racialism.

The English claimed to be descended from the Anglo-Saxons, and to have inherited from them traits of independence, industriousness, and the love of liberty. England's supposedly unrivalled legal system, commercial spirit, cultural achievement and imperial dominance were seen as the fruits of this descent.

The 19th century historian John Richard Green encapsulated this view when he wrote of Anglo-Saxon society that "the whole after-

life of English society was there. In its village-moots lay our parliament; in the gleeman of its village feasts our Chaucer and our Shakespeare; in the pirate-bark stealing from creek to creek our Drakes and our Nelsons".

But what did this all mean for Wales? Well the upshot was a view that can be summarised as "Saxon good, Celt bad". If the Saxon heritage was unequivocally positive, then the Celtic legacy was seen by the English as largely negative.

The most infamous example of this was the so-called *Treachery of the Blue Books* (1847). This government report depicted the Welsh as lazy, lawless and immoral; the antithesis of all the qualities that the English believed themselves to possess.

Moreover, it made a link between these characteristics and the Welsh language, which it claimed was "a vast drawback to Wales and a manifold barrier to the moral progress and commercial prosperity of the people".

This connection was significant because, in the 1800s, language was seen as a badge of ethnicity and nation. If you spoke Welsh then you were Welsh, with all the negative connotations which, from an English perspective, that implied.

The perception of Wales from across the border was consequently of a society that

was less advanced than England. Welsh history had failed to deliver the benefits of progress. Welsh ethnicity lacked the inherent qualities that made such progress possible. The English mission in Wales, as in the Empire, was therefore to civilise the barbarians by giving them the benefit of English law, commerce, education, and language.

However, more positive interpretations of Welsh culture did exist. As the English tourist George Borrow wrote in 1862, Wales was "abounding with noble scenery, rich in eventful histories, and ... dotted with the birthplaces of heroes and poets".

Nevertheless, such views did not dispute the assumption that Wales was less developed than England. They merely saw that lack of advancement as attractively picturesque rather than distastefully barbarous.

Welsh history could therefore be enjoyed on a romantic level, but the explanations for British greatness were found exclusively in the English past.

In this way British history became English history, just as the United Kingdom itself was an Anglo-centred project. The history of Wales, and of Scotland and Ireland, was at best a romantic backwater and at worst had been a drag on English progress.

Thus we arrive at the outlooks of Schama and Starkey etc. Yet those outlooks are based on a narrow and subjective assessment of how societies ought to develop over time. Welsh history does not fit that mould but, with a decade of devolution behind us, does it really need to anymore?

**'Dai' hats, the traditional flat caps of Welsh workers, are in high fashion**

In the past they were worn by Britain's urban working class – arguably most famously by coal miners of the South Wales Valleys. Now, the Dai cap is making a reappearance as the must-have fashion accessory for men this winter, reports **Aled Blake**

**T**HEY were once the preserve of Wales' working class, an iconic and vital part of a uniform worn by coal miners, labourers in our docks and iron workers.

Now, the flat cap is making a come back – but not because our heavy industries are undergoing a phoenix-like comeback.

This time, head-wear that would once only be seen adorned by the poorest and hardest working, is now being worn by some of the world's most famous people.

Brad Pitt, David Beckham, Rhys Ifans, Justin Timberlake have joined the likes of the Tetley Tea men in favouring the flat cap over baseball caps and beanies.

They are just some of the celebrities who have been seen wearing flat caps – known as Dai caps in many parts of Wales.

And such has been the success of the traditional hats,



■ Singer Justin Timberlake



■ Rhys Ifans on stage with his band The Peth

that high street Marks & Spencer has reported a staggering rise in demand for flat caps – with sales 11 times higher than a year ago.

The high street retailer has reported a massive 989% increase in sales of flat caps.

Tony O'Connor, head of design at M&S menswear, explains: "We've seen an increase in sales of flat caps for men this season."

"With iconic characters such as the Tetley Tea folk back on our screens, and stars such as David Beckham and Justin Timberlake supporting the trend, the flat cap is having its moment."

"Not only is the flat cap a success with traditional looks, but it is also attracting a new customer base with British heritage style being a key trend for men this winter."

It is not just the working classes who wore the flat cap, they have also been the hats of choice for Britain's posh folk for generations.

Along with other classic British styles – such as Barbour and Burberry – the flat cap is returning as the head-wear of choice for the fashion-conscious.



■ Working men wearing their flat caps during The Tonypandy Riots 1910-11

Wenda James-Rowe, style adviser for Cardiff-based thestyleteam.com, says that each year a key fashion piece makes a comeback – this year's being the flat cap.

And she advises men to think about their outfits properly before simply pulling on any old Dai cap from the hat stand.

"The flat cap seems to be something that's being worn by an awful lot of celebrities," she says.

"To carry them off well, you need to look relatively young, trendy and fashionable and you have to think about what you are wearing them with."

"For a guy, that means knitwear, a funky scarf and a man-bag. You have to think about how you are putting your look together."

"You have to be a bit more careful if you are a middle aged man and you are just putting it on without any thought, you are not going to look as on-trend as younger men."



■ Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt

And colour is also important – with an emphasis on subtlety rather than anything too garish.

"The big colours this year are black, as always, and grey. Stay away from white or a bold colour."

Why is the flat cap making

such a strong appearance this winter? Wenda puts it down to celebrity trends and the consequent attention of the media.

"Quite often, these things are media driven. "Or maybe one of the major designers has used it on their catwalk range."

"You can never be quite sure where these trends come from – we've also seen the trapper hat this year making a massive appearance as well. But the flat cap is a lot more refined and sophisticated."

The move towards accessorising by men is one that has been a long time coming, says Wenda.

"Accessorising has gone to new levels in the last five years. I always talk about accessories and how you can make a statement, it's something the French do very well."

"Hats are big in Europe and we have seen them making a big return to the UK high street in the last few years."

**MORNING SERIAL**

**L**ight from her flickering candle came through the crack in the bedroom door.

She was coming to bed. When she was at the top of the stairs, I distinctly heard her mutter to herself, as she wept softly: "Jäbez; ty'd adre."

[Jäbez; come home.] Her bedroom door shut quietly.

The wind rattled the window again. Tired, I turned over and went to sleep.

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Feeding the cat; water from the well; feeding the hens; coal on the fire; fetching and feeding the cow; milking time; meal times, with an empty chair at the table...

Mam wept about the house continuously; she took off her spectacles and tried to wipe them with her far-too-moist handkerchief. In the evening, she turned into a statue for what seemed like ages: stunned; absent-minded; staring a blank stare into the distance. I lit a candle and walked down the passage, stopping briefly to prevent the draught blowing it out.

Through the back kitchen into the wash-house, where I placed the candle on the window-sill, so that its light shone across the backyard to the coal house. I filled the coal scuttle and brought it in.

Another night of weeping.

People came. One morning Mr and Mrs Williams Beehive came with Jack. While Mrs Williams was in the house with Mam, the men stood outside near the front door. They were talking, careful to be out of Mam's hearing. It was about diphtheria – the symptoms: swelling of the neck and throat; throaty voice.

Up and down the country, local outbreaks of the disease occurred from time to time. It was infectious; one of those boys playing football could well have been a carrier. (The two men were talking quietly, unaware I was standing just inside the door, listening.)

It was a disease that spread rapidly through the body, taking a hold without you being aware: it paralysed the throat, making swallowing difficult; it damaged the heart; sight became blurred; muscles of arms and legs became paralysed... breathing became very difficult: if the disease hasn't taken too great a hold and the child is taken to hospital in time, they can put a breathing tube into the front of the windpipe...

■ The Songbird is Singing by Alun Trevor is published by Parthian, priced at £9.99. For more information visit [www.parthianbooks.co.uk](http://www.parthianbooks.co.uk)

> CONTINUES TOMORROW



**The Songbird is Singing** by Alun Trevor